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SUBJECT: Argentina: The Kirchners Give Themselves Top Grades

¶1. (SBU) Fed up with dozens of pessimistic surveys showing President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) and her team's declining approval ratings, the editor-in-chief of pro-government "K Magazine" ("Revista Ka") Damian Barijhoff decided to give the Kirchners a New Year's gift: publication next week of the President and her team's own assessment of their performance. This limited issue of the privately circulated magazine has not yet appeared. According to advance press reports, 460 Kirchner cabinet ministers, governors, mayors, and legislators and other Kirchner-allied officials "graded" CFK administration officials, but the Kirchner couple reportedly reviewed, vetted, and possibly altered the final scores. The publication is rumored to be financed by Rudy Ulloa, the former Kirchner chauffeur and confidant who is now a media mogul in Santa Cruz province.

¶2. (SBU) As in an Argentine academic report card, the President's team received scores ranging from 1 to 10, with 10 being the equivalent of an A. CFK was the only one to receive the "outstanding" score of 10, followed closely by her hard-working husband and right-hand man, former President Nestor Kirchner, who obtained a "meritorious" 9.5. Next on the list of top performers is loyal Planning Minister Julio De Vido, who received a 9 "plus" and won "Minister of the Year." Cabinet Chief Sergio Massa with his 8 raised some eyebrows by scoring the same as Kirchner's sister, Minister of Social Development Alicia Kirchner, and besting his supposed rival, Interior Minister Florencio Randazzo. FM Jorge Taiana and Labor Minister Carlos Tomada got a 7, the equivalent of a "gentleman's C."

¶3. (SBU) Justice Minister Anibal Fernandez got a six, surprisingly low given his prominence as an administration spokesman (and sometimes attack-dog). Joining the Justice Minister in the middle of the pack with sixes were Economy Minister Carlos Fernandez, Education Minister Juan Carlos Tedesco, and Science & Technology Minister Lino Baranao. Further down are Health Minister Graciela Ocana and Defense Minister Nilda Garre, both of whom barely "passed" with a score of 5. If anyone is to be stuck in the classroom over summer break, however, it will probably be Vice President Julio Cobos, who received a "failing" grade of 1, or Presidential Secretary General Oscar Parrilli, who received an unexplained "minus four."

¶4. (SBU) Comment: With the exception of CFK and a couple of others, the grades (averaging 6.33) are -- considering their source -- surprisingly harsh. The publication will not be available at newsstands, but only in executive branch buildings, in Congressional, Governors', and Mayors' offices, and at the country's top beaches, the favored summer destination of Argentina's political elite. With rumors of cabinet changes beginning to circulate again, the report card is already being scrutinized for signs of presidential favor and disfavor.

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